

Amendments to the Claims

1 Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of enhancing a voice mail message for playback to a
2 listener, ~~further comprising~~ steps of:

3 creating ~~[[a]] the~~ voice mail message for ~~[[a]] the~~ listener, by a caller using a telephone
4 device, the voice mail message comprising a plurality of message segments;

5 identifying, by the caller using the telephone device, at least two of the message segments
6 which are to have background ~~[[sound]] sounds~~ associated therewith;

7 selecting, for each of the identified message segments by the caller using the telephone
8 device, a sound to be associated therewith as the background sound, wherein the sounds selected
9 as the background sound for at least two of the message segments are different sounds; and

10 responsive to a request from the listener for playback of the voice mail message, playing
11 back at least two of the identified message segments for which a sound was selected to be
12 associated therewith as the background sound, while concurrently playing back the sound selected
13 as the background sound for each of the played-backed identified message segments, and wherein
14 the sounds selected as the background sound for at least two of the played-back identified
15 message segments are different sounds, such that the background sound played back for the voice
16 mail message changes at least once during the playback.

Claims 2 - 8 (canceled)

1 Claim 9 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selecting step
2 further comprises entering, by the caller using the telephone device, a caller-specific personal

3 identification value, and wherein the entering of the caller-specific personal identification value
4 causes the sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be automatically
5 selected, without intervention by the caller.

Claim 10 (canceled)

1 Claim 11 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step
2 of creating, by the caller, a caller-specific profile prior to creating the voice mail message, wherein
3 the caller-specific profile indicates which sounds are to be selected as background sounds on
4 which days; and wherein the selecting step further comprises automatically processing the caller-
5 specific profile, responsive to the caller identifying the message segments, thereby causing the
6 sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be automatically selected, based
7 on the day on which the voice mail message is created.

Claims 12 - 13 (canceled)

1 Claim 14 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selected
2 background sounds are selected randomly from a plurality of available background sounds.

1 Claim 15 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step
2 of creating, by the caller, a caller-specific profile prior to creating the voice mail message; and
3 wherein the selecting step further comprises automatically processing the caller-specific profile,

4 responsive to the caller identifying the message segments, thereby causing the sounds to be
5 associated with the identified message segments to be automatically selected according to the
6 profile, without intervention by the caller.

Claim 16 (canceled)

1 Claim 17 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selecting step
2 further comprises selecting each of the sounds, by the caller, from among a plurality of sounds
3 which are ~~statically~~ configured as non-updateable sounds selectable from the telephone device.

1 Claim 18 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selected sounds
2 are selected from among a plurality of sounds that are available to, and offered to the caller by, an
3 apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded.

Claim 19 (canceled)

1 Claim 20 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step
2 of transmitting the selected background sounds from the telephone device to an apparatus on
3 which the voice mail message is being recorded.

1 Claim 21 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 20, wherein the selected
2 background sounds are compressed prior to the transmitting.

1 Claim 22 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step
2 of transmitting, for each of the selected sounds, an identifier thereof from the telephone device to
3 an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded, for use by the apparatus to
4 obtain the played-back sounds.

1 Claim 23 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step
2 of transmitting, for each of the selected sounds, an address thereof from the telephone device to
3 an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded, wherein the transmitted address
4 for each of the selected sounds is usable for locating a file to use as the played-back sound.

1 Claims 24 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 23, wherein at least one of the
2 transmitted addresses is a Uniform Resource Locator.

Claims 25 - 27 (canceled)

1 Claim 28 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the selecting step
2 further comprises the step of selecting at least one of the sounds using one of: a dual-tone multi-
3 frequency (DTMF) capability of the telephone device; a touch-sensitive display screen of the
4 telephone device; a key sequence operated using keys of the telephone device; or a voice
5 recognition capability provided by a voice messaging system which records the voice mail
6 message.

Claims 29 - 33 (canceled)

1 Claim 34 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages for playback to a
2 listener, ~~further comprising steps of:~~

3 creating a voice mail message for ~~[[a]] the~~ listener, by a caller using a telephone device;
4 ~~identifying, by the caller using the telephone device while creating [[,]] the voice mail~~
5 ~~message, a comprising a plurality of message segments for segmenting the voice mail message;~~

6 selecting, by the caller using the telephone device, an audio file to insert into the voice
7 mail message ~~[[(1)]]~~ between one or more selected pairs of successive ones of the message
8 segments, ~~(2) prior to a first one of the message segments, and/or (3) following a last one of the~~
9 ~~message segments,~~ such that the selected audio file is associated with the selected pair(s) of
10 message segments, ~~the first one of the message segments, and/or the last one of the message~~
11 ~~segments, respectively; and~~

12 inserting the selected audio file between the successive ones of the message segments in its
13 associated pair(s), ~~prior to the associated first one of the message segments, and/or following the~~
14 ~~associated last one of the message segments, as appropriate;~~ as the voice mail message is played
15 back to the listener.

Claims 35 - 36 (canceled)

1 Claim 37 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 34, wherein the audio file is an

2 audio signature associated with a speaker of the voice mail message.

Claims 38 - 89 (canceled)

1 Claim 90 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 20, wherein a telephone call
2 placed by the caller for creating the voice mail message is transparently extended, without
3 intervention of the caller, following the caller's completion of the voice mail message, and
4 wherein the transmitting occurs during the transparent extension, after which the transparently-
5 extended telephone call is automatically ended.

Claims 91 - 98 (canceled)

1 Claim 99 (new): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the plurality of message segments
2 are identified by the caller using the telephone device.

1 Claim 100 (new): A system for enhancing a voice mail message for playback to a listener,
2 comprising:

3 means for creating the voice mail message for the listener, by a caller using a telephone
4 device, the voice mail message comprising a plurality of message segments;

5 means for identifying, by the caller using the telephone device, at least two of the message
6 segments which are to have background sounds associated therewith;

7 means for selecting, for each of the identified message segments by the caller using the

8 telephone device, a sound to be associated therewith as the background sound, wherein the
9 sounds selected as the background sound for at least two of the message segments are different
10 sounds; and

11 means for playing back, responsive to a request from the listener for playback of the voice
12 mail message, at least two of the identified message segments for which a sound was selected to
13 be associated therewith as the background sound, while concurrently playing back the sound
14 selected as the background sound for each of the played-back identified message segments, and
15 wherein the sounds selected as the background sound for at least two of the played-back
16 identified message segments are different sounds, such that the background sound played back for
17 the voice mail message changes at least once during the playback.

1 Claim 101 (new): The system according to Claim 100, wherein the plurality of message segments
2 are identified by the caller using the telephone device.

1 Claim 102 (new): The system according to Claim 100, wherein the means for selecting further
2 comprises means for entering, by the caller using the telephone device, a caller-specific personal
3 identification value, and wherein the entering of the caller-specific personal identification value
4 causes the sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be automatically
5 selected, without intervention by the caller.

1 Claim 103 (new): The system according to Claim 100, further comprising means for creating, by
2 the caller, a caller-specific profile prior to creating the voice mail message, wherein the caller-

3 specific profile indicates which sounds are to be selected as background sounds on which days;
4 and wherein the means for selecting further comprises means for automatically processing the
5 caller-specific profile, responsive to the caller identifying the message segments, thereby causing
6 the sounds to be associated with the identified message segments to be automatically selected,
7 based on the day on which the voice mail message is created.

1 Claim 104 (new): The system according to Claim 100, wherein the selected background sounds
2 are selected randomly from a plurality of available background sounds.

1 Claim 105 (new): The system according to Claim 100, further comprising means for creating, by
2 the caller, a caller-specific profile prior to creating the voice mail message; and wherein the means
3 for selecting further comprises means for automatically processing the caller-specific profile,
4 responsive to the caller identifying the message segments, thereby causing the sounds to be
5 associated with the identified message segments to be automatically selected according to the
6 profile, without intervention by the caller.

1 Claim 106 (new): The system according to Claim 100, wherein the means for selecting further
2 comprises means for selecting each of the sounds, by the caller, from among a plurality of sounds
3 which are configured as non-updateable sounds selectable from the telephone device.

1 Claim 107 (new): The system according to Claim 100, wherein the selected sounds are selected
2 from among a plurality of sounds that are available to, and offered to the caller by, an apparatus

on which the voice mail message is being recorded.

Claim 108 (new): The system according to Claim 100, further comprising means for transmitting the selected background sounds from the telephone device to an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded.

Claim 109 (new): The system according to Claim 100, further comprising means for transmitting, for each of the selected sounds, an identifier thereof from the telephone device to an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded, for use by the apparatus to obtain the played-back sounds.

Claim 110 (new): The system according to Claim 100, further comprising means for transmitting, for each of the selected sounds, an address thereof from the telephone device to an apparatus on which the voice mail message is being recorded, wherein the transmitted address for each of the selected sounds is usable for locating a file to use as the played-back sound.

Claim 111 (new): A computer program product for enhancing a voice mail message for playback to a listener, the computer program product embodied on at least one computer-usable medium and comprising:

computer-usable program code for enabling a caller to create the voice mail message for the listener, using a telephone device, the voice mail message comprising a plurality of message segments;

7 computer-usable program code for enabling the caller to identify, using the telephone
8 device, at least two of the message segments which are to have background sounds associated
9 therewith;

10 computer-usable program code for enabling the caller to select, for each of the identified
11 message segments by the caller using the telephone device, a sound to be associated therewith as
12 the background sound, wherein the sounds selected as the background sound for at least two of
13 the message segments are different sounds; and

14 computer-usable program code for playing back, responsive to a request from the listener
15 for playback of the voice mail message, at least two of the identified message segments for which
16 a sound was selected to be associated therewith as the background sound, while concurrently
17 playing back the sound selected as the background sound for each of the played-backed identified
18 message segments, and wherein the sounds selected as the background sound for at least two of
19 the played-back identified message segments are different sounds, such that the background sound
20 played back for the voice mail message changes at least once during the playback.

1 Claim 112 (new): The computer program product according to Claim 111, wherein the plurality
2 of message segments are identified by the caller using the telephone device.

1 Claim 113 (new): The computer program product according to Claim 111, wherein the
2 computer-usable program code for enabling the caller to select further comprises computer-usable
3 program code for enabling the caller to select at least one of the sounds using one of: a dual-tone
4 multi-frequency (DTMF) capability of the telephone device; a touch-sensitive display screen of the

5 telephone device; a key sequence operated using keys of the telephone device; or a voice
6 recognition capability provided by a voice messaging system which records the voice mail
7 message.

1 Claim 114 (new): A system for enhancing voice mail messages for playback to a listener,
2 comprising:

3 means for creating a voice mail message for the listener, by a caller using a telephone
4 device;

5 means for identifying, by the caller using the telephone device while creating the voice
6 mail message, a plurality of message segments for segmenting the voice mail message;

7 means for selecting, by the caller using the telephone device, an audio file to insert into the
8 voice mail message between one or more selected pairs of successive ones of the message
9 segments, such that the selected audio file is associated with the selected pair(s) of message
10 segments; and

11 means for inserting the selected audio file between the successive ones of the message
12 segments in its associated pair(s) as the voice mail message is played back to the listener.

1 Claim 115 (new): The system according to Claim 114, wherein the audio file is an audio
2 signature associated with a speaker of the voice mail message.